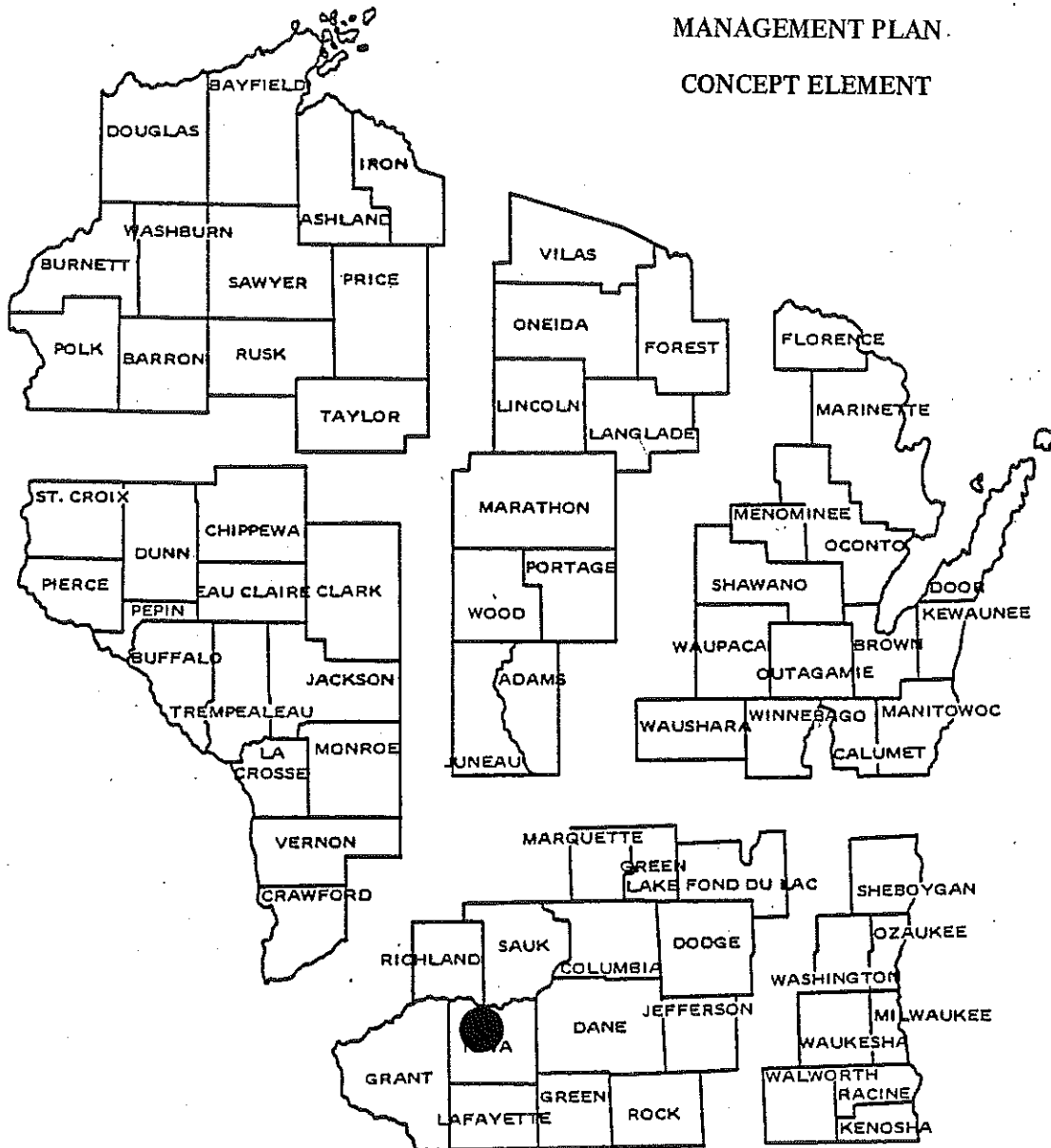


BLACKHAWK LAKE WILDLIFE AREA

MANAGEMENT PLAN

CONCEPT ELEMENT



Property Task Force

Leader: Tom Hauge - Wildlife Manager
Gene Van Dyck - Area Fish Manager
Jim Widder - Area Forester
LeRoy Wiesner - Conservation Warden

Approved By: _____

Date: 12/1985

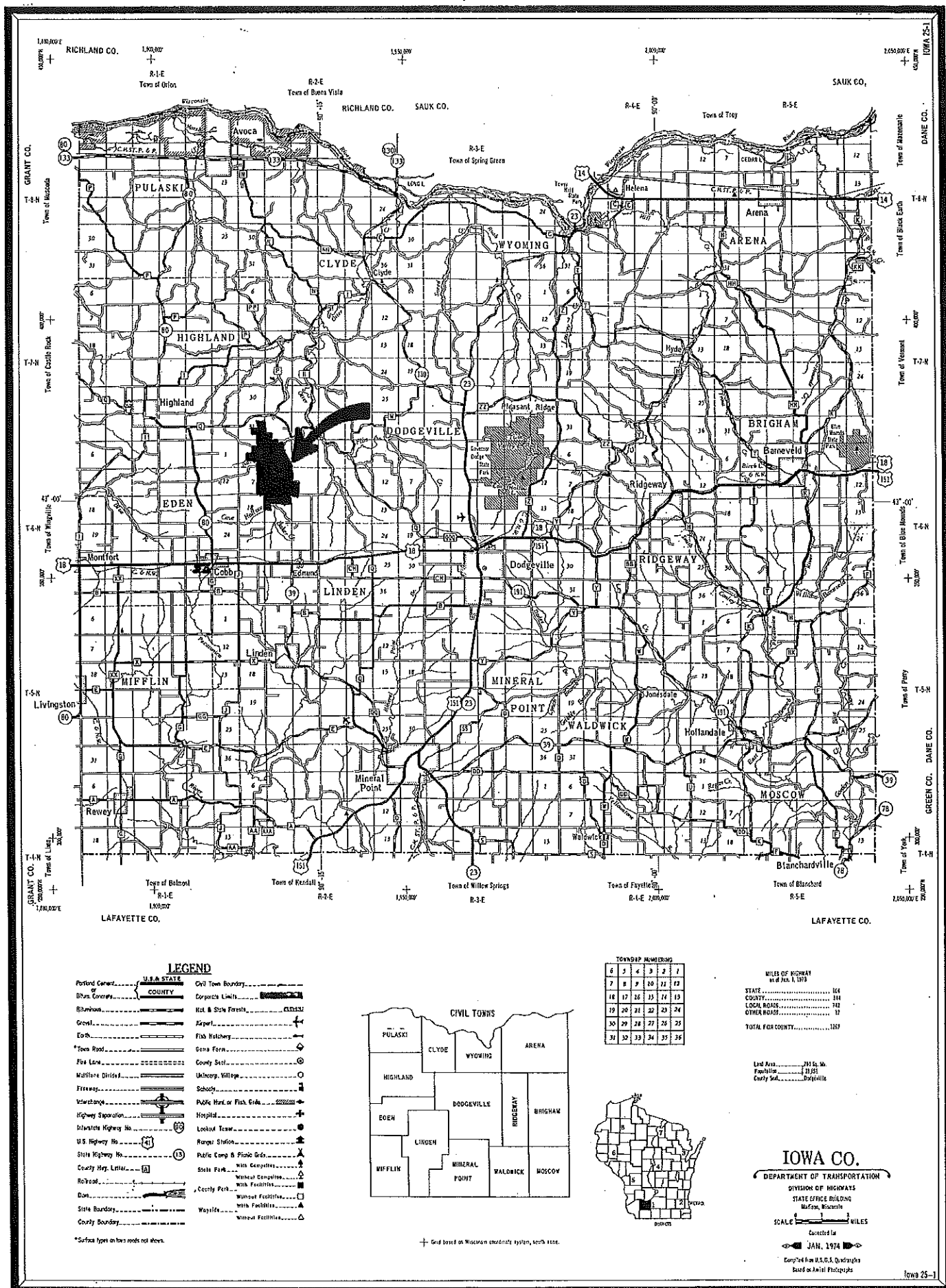


FIGURE 1 LOCATOR

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SECTION I - ACTIONS

BLACKHAWK LAKE WILDLIFE AREA

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND OTHER BENEFITS

Goal:

To manage a state-owned wildlife area for upland wildlife production, provide for public hunting and trapping, maintain a warmwater fishery, and provide opportunities for education and compatible recreation.

Annual Objectives:

1. Provide 12,500 angler-days of fishing for panfish, bass, and walleye.
2. Provide 750 angler-days of stream trout fishing.
3. Provide opportunities for 3,250 participant-days of hunting and trapping recreation as follows:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Participant-Days</u>
a. Deer (gun and bow)	1,500
b. Pheasant/Rabbit/Quail/Huns	750
c. Ruffed Grouse/Woodcock/Squirrel	650
d. Fox/Raccoon/Muskrat/Beaver	250
e. Waterfowl	100

4. Provide an opportunity for 200 participant-days of hunting dog trial and training activities.
5. Provide opportunities for 900 participant-days for snowmobiling recreation in association with a county trail system.

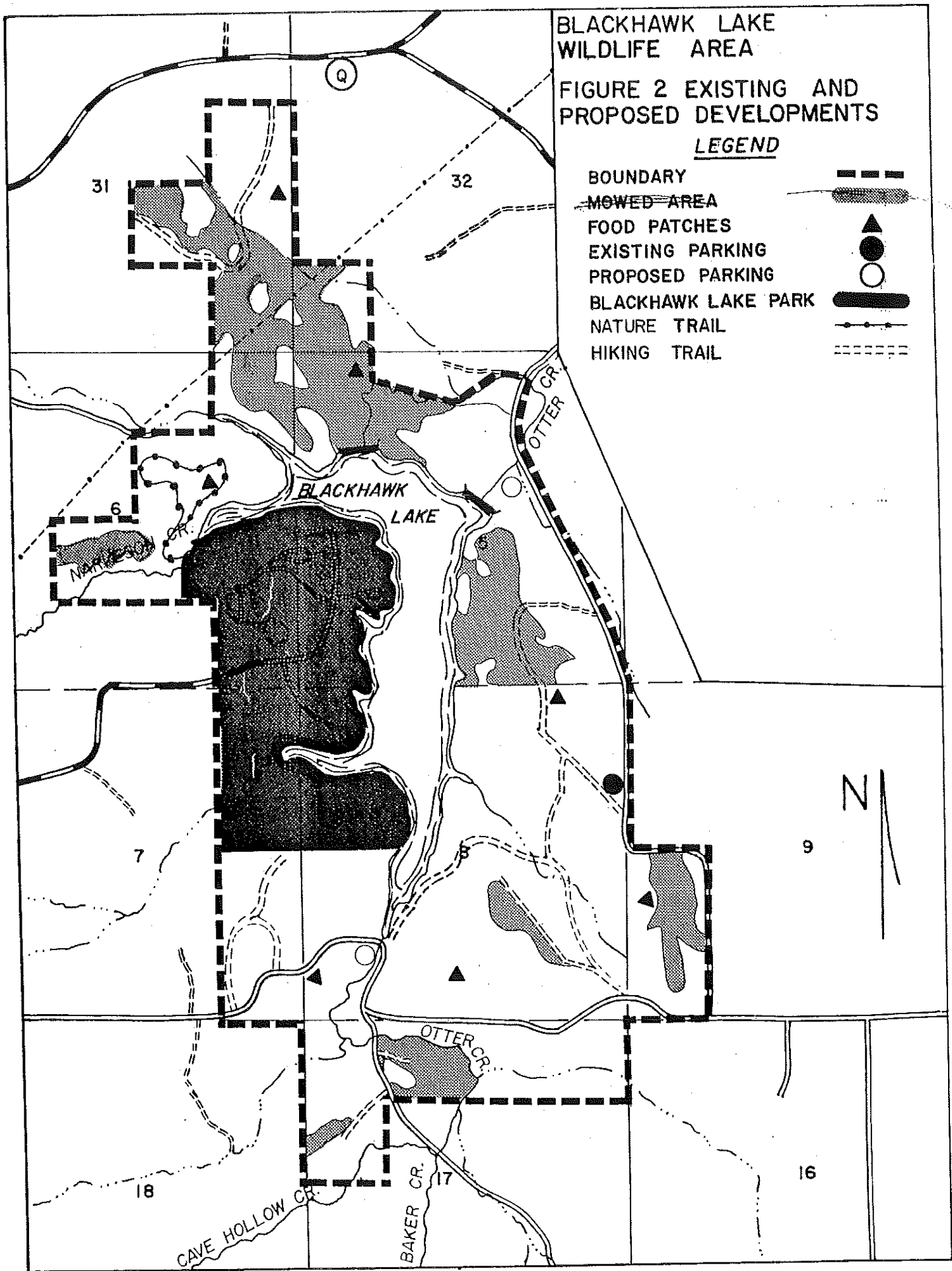
Annual Additional Benefits:

1. Accommodate 1,400 participant-days of other recreational activities including cross-country skiing, hiking and wildlife observation.
2. Contribute to the habitat of other resident and migratory wildlife.

RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Consistent with the goal and objectives for managing the Blackhawk Lake Wildlife Area, the following management program will be undertaken:

1. Maintain 200 acres in open, non-woody, vegetation for pheasant, bobwhite quail, Hungarian partridge, and waterfowl production (Figure 2). Sharecropping for corn, sorghum, and hay on tillable fields, in conjunction with burning and mowing of non-tillable fields will be the primary method used against woody encroachment. Occasional use of herbicides may be necessary.



2. Maintain a bass-panfish fishery. Populations of largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, yellow perch, black bullheads, crappies, and bluegills are present. No additional management for these species is foreseen. Should natural reproduction stop, the causes will be investigated and any necessary rehabilitation will be implemented.
3. Continue to provide walleye fishing opportunity. The present management policy includes stocking 11,000 walleye fingerlings every other year. Department field personnel will investigate the potential for construction of spawning bars to stimulate natural walleye production. A bar currently exists in the middle of the lake, but was poorly constructed and inappropriately located and is not suitable for walleye spawning.

Fish management personnel assigned to the Department's Dodgeville office are currently developing a walleye rearing program in cooperation with rod and gun clubs. The Department provides walleye fry, and clubs raise them until they are large enough for stocking. If the program is successful, the Department will consider building a rearing pond adjacent to Blackhawk Lake. Locating the pond in the wildlife area would eliminate transportation costs and protect the pond from runoff contamination.

4. Improve the carrying capacity for trout in Narveson and Otter Creeks, which were dammed to form the flowage. The dams in Blackhawk Lake at the confluence with both creeks need repair to manage the streams properly (Figure 2). The Narveson Creek dam allows bottom water to flow into the creek year-round; repairs will allow the bottom release mechanism to be closed reasonably to prevent water rich in hydrogen sulfide from entering the creek. Otter Creek is receiving too much warm surface water; dam repairs will allow the temperature of the water flowing into the creek to be modified to the lower temperatures preferred by trout.

The responsibility for operating these dams and managing stream flow lies with the Iowa County Land Conservation District.

5. Continue management of Otter Creek above Blackhawk Lake (to the south) as a Class II trout stream. Management will include habitat protection, development, and stocking. Some natural reproduction of trout occurs in this section of the stream. Predatory fish, such as northern pike and muskies, should not be established in Blackhawk Lake. If introduced, they would surely migrate up Otter Creek and adversely impact the existing trout fishery.
6. Improve bobwhite quail habitat. One-quarter acre food patches of corn and sorghum will be established at various locations within the wildlife area (Figure 2). Brushy hedgerows will be preserved and new ones established where necessary. Brush piles will be provided for escape cover.

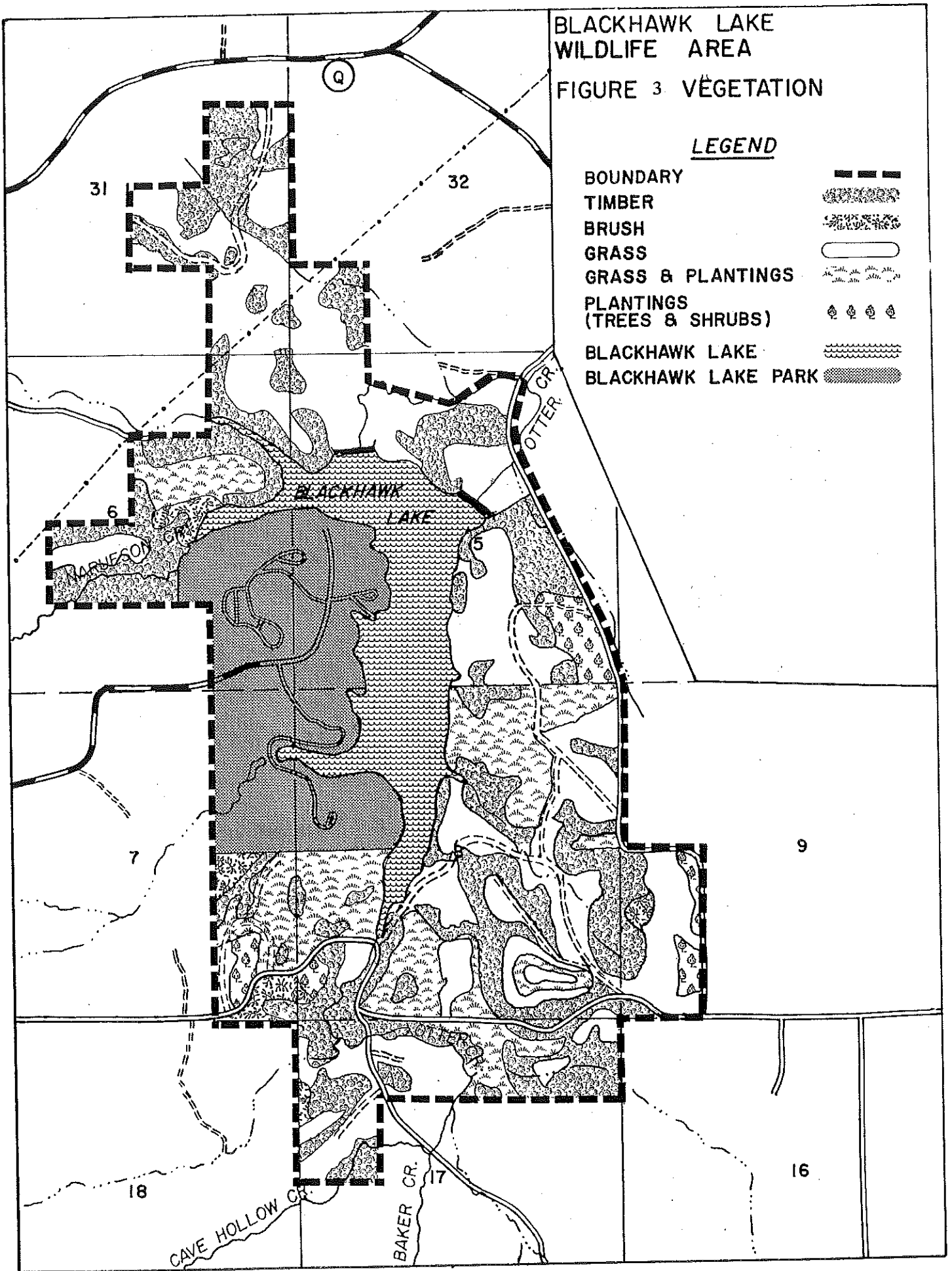
7. Maximize the wildlife habitat potential of the conifer plantings. Approximately 255 acres at Blackhawk have been planted to conifer species, primarily red and white pine and white and Norway spruce. Conifer plantings provide excellent loafing escape and winter cover for wildlife. Efforts will be taken at Blackhawk Lake to thin conifer stands as needed and, in some cases, break up overly large plantations with other vegetation (Figure 3).

8. Continue the pheasant stocking program. The cost-effectiveness of the stocking effort and the quality of the resulting hunt need improvement. The wildlife area is distant enough from Poynette that high mileage costs make it prohibitive to stock pheasants at frequent intervals. The great influx of pheasants on stocking days produces artificially high bags, and problems exist with hunters following the stocking truck and shooting the newly released, disoriented birds.

Construction of an on-site holding pen would make more frequent stocking practical. This system would alleviate the hunting problems while keeping the stocking costs at nearly the present level. Also, the stocking of game farm hens should be considered to supplement pheasant hunting opportunity. An on-site holding pen would also provide a close source of birds to support a dog training and trial program.

9. Manage woodlands to maximize annual mast production as well as provide for a balanced interspersed of forest age classes (Figure 3). Maintenance and enhancement of the aspen-oak-hickory forest complexes will be the primary goal. Current silvicultural prescriptions for these species recommend clear cutting to stimulate regrowth. To minimize the possibility of any adverse visual impacts due to regeneration cutting, harvests would be kept under 5 acres in size.
10. Provide adequate recreational access (Figure 2 & 4). Additional gravel parking areas will be installed where needed to reduce the traffic hazards presented by cars parking along the roadside. An attempt will be made to secure road access to the north end of the wildlife area for habitat and facility maintenance work.
12. Land acquisition is considered complete at 1,610 acres (Figure 4). However, a boundary modification and additional 2 acres for access purposes is recommended for the northern boundary.
13. All areas proposed for development will be examined for the presence of endangered or threatened wild animals and plants. If found, development will be halted until the District Endangered and Nongame Species Coordinator is consulted, the site evaluated, and appropriate protective measures taken.
14. A complete biological inventory of the property will be conducted as funds permit. Additional property objectives may be developed following completion of such a survey.

BLACKHAWK LAKE
WILDLIFE AREA
FIGURE 3 VEGETATION

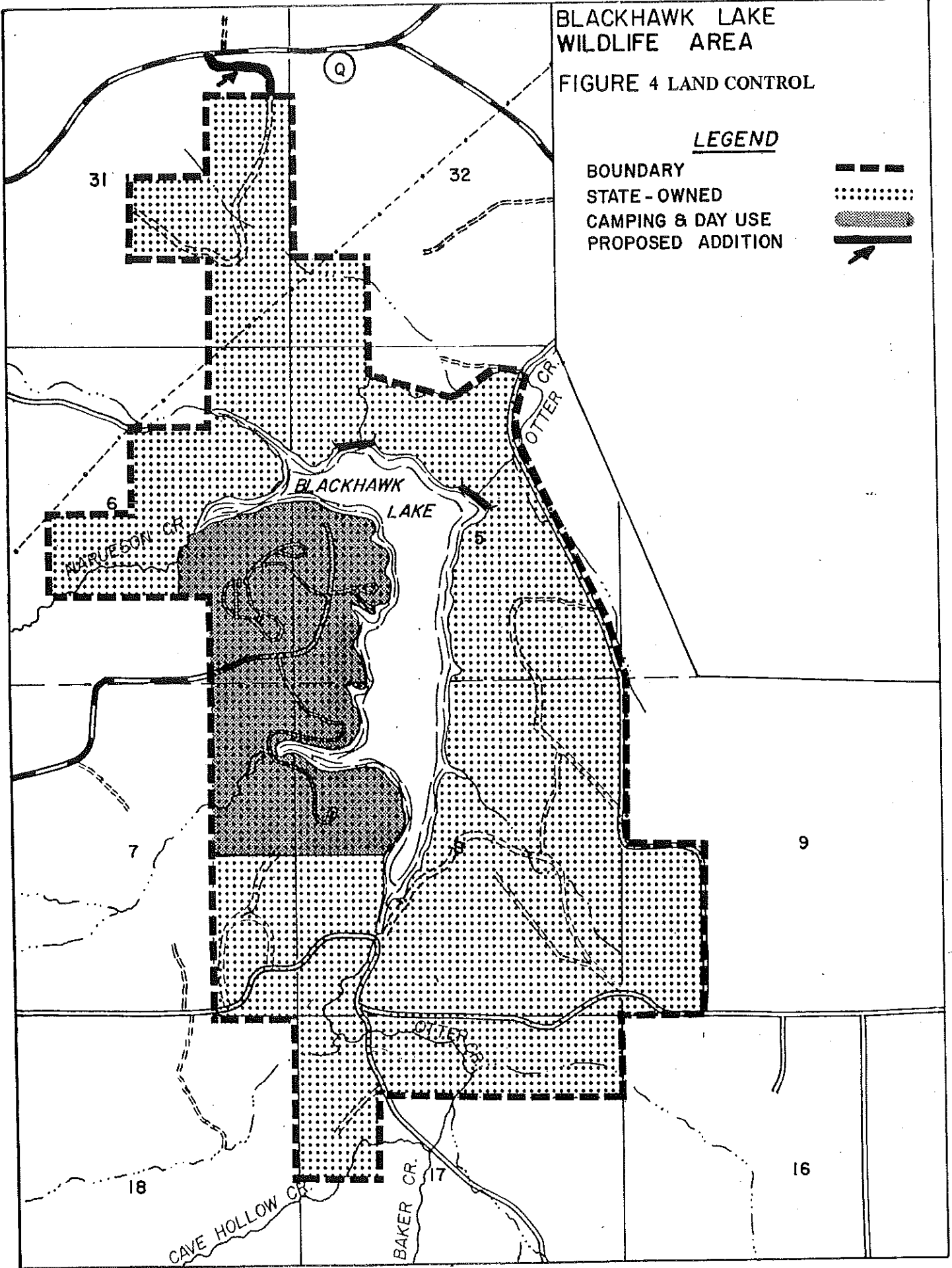


BLACKHAWK LAKE WILDLIFE AREA

FIGURE 4 LAND CONTROL

LEGEND

BOUNDARY
STATE - OWNED
CAMPING & DAY USE
PROPOSED ADDITION



15. All areas of future development will also be investigated for the presence of historically significant sites and appropriate measures taken. If found, development would be halted until the State Historical Preservation Office is consulted.

SECTION II - SUPPORT DATA

Property History - Current Management:

The Blackhawk Lake Wildlife Area is part of the former Blackhawk Recreation Area. Planning operations for the recreation area began in 1960 when the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District applied for assistance from the USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS) under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (P.L. 566). In 1964, the development of a recreational lake in conjunction with a flood retarding dam was added to the plan.

The Otter Creek Watershed Project was approved in 1966. The co-sponsors were the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Cobb-Highland (two nearby villages) Recreation Commission. Funding came from county, state and federal funds. During 1966 and 1969, 2,040 acres were purchased. These lands were deeded to the state as part of the requirements for financial assistance.

The state subsequently conveyed a perpetual easement to the Cobb-Highland Recreation Commission on 430 acres to be developed as an intensive recreation area. The intensive recreation area now includes a 114-site campground, beach area, concession stand, boat launch and parking area, and nature trail.

Management activities on the wildlife area have included planting hardwoods, conifers, and shrubs. An estimated 200,000 trees and 75,000 shrubs have been planted. Rooster pheasants have been stocked in fall prior to and during the open season. Walleye fingerlings have been stocked in the lake. Several hay cutting permits have been issued to local farmers in the past to limit woody invasion of open grass fields. However, regrowth of grassy areas prior to the pheasant hunting seasons has proven insufficient to provide good cover. *240 birds*

Local interest in fishing has been high. The Highland Sportsmens Club has supplemented the fishing opportunity by releasing 150 channel catfish (avg. wt. 3 lbs.) into the lake in 1981, and releasing an additional 1,200 catfish fingerlings in 1982. In addition, during 1981 and 1982, the club stocked the lake with 12,000 rainbow trout and 300 co-op reared walleye fingerlings.

Resource Inventory:

Blackhawk Lake is a nutrient flowage of 212 acres. The average depth of the lake is 16 feet, with a maximum depth of 40 feet. Average pH values of the water vary between 7.5 and 8.0.

Except for occasional migratory Cooper's hawks, no endangered or threatened plant or animal species are known to be found on the property. Wildlife using the area includes white-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, bobwhite quail, Hungarian partridge, turkeys, pheasants, cottontail rabbits, gray and fox squirrels, red and gray fox, raccoons, mink, coyote, muskrat, beaver, blue-winged teal, wood ducks, and mallards. A variety of songbirds and nongame small mammals also inhabit the area.

The land within the wildlife area boundaries is primarily rolling upland. The predominant woodland types include open oak savanna, oak/hickory, or central hardwoods. These trees are estimated to be 90-120 years old. Conifer plantings of white and red pine and white and Norway spruce occupy 255 acres. The remaining upland vegetation varies from open mowed grassland to mixed grassy shrubland. Some prairie plants exist on the wildlife area, but earlier extensive farming and grazing eliminated most of them. A small wetland has developed in the shallow water area at the south end of the lake.

The soils are mainly of the Dubuque variety and vary in depth from thin to medium. Construction of the impoundment dam removed some topsoil from the better areas on the property. The steep slopes within the wildlife area and likelihood of erosion dictates that contour cropping and/or no-till methods be used to produce food and cover.

The State Historical Society has indicated that there are no known historical or archeological sites within the wildlife area. However, because such sites have been found elsewhere within the Otter Creek drainage, the possibility exists that additional sites might be found on the wildlife area. The State Historical Preservation officer will be contacted prior to initiating any ground disturbance activities.

ANALYSIS OF MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

1. Continue Current Program:

This alternative would only provide for routine maintenance activities such as posting, fencing and stocking. It would not address habitat maintenance/improvement needs or improved parking facilities. No additional land would be acquired. Without habitat improvement or maintenance, the diversity and abundance of wildlife found on the property in the future would be reduced.

Conversion of the grassland areas to woodland would eliminate the pheasant and bobwhite quail. Succession of the oak-hickory-aspen forest to central hardwoods such as maple would reduce squirrel, grouse, white-tailed deer, fox and rabbit populations. This alternative is not recommended because of the low probability that the wildlife area could continue to meet its goal.

2. Increase Management Activity (Selected Alternative):

Under this alternative, a more aggressive wildlife program would be undertaken. Development of food patches and parking areas would be implemented. Important forest and unforested habitat types would be preserved. Attempts would be made to improve the method of pheasant stocking to discourage unethical behavior. While the amount of land controlled is considered adequate, the possibility of seeking additional land for public hunting purposes would not be dismissed.

This plan recommends this alternative as most desirable. Increasing demand for wildlife related recreation dictates that wildlife production be maximized on public lands. This alternative would meet the property goals and objectives shown in Section I.

3. Decrease Involvement:

Decreased involvement could mean the elimination of the management activity currently practiced. This is not a feasible alternative. At least, maintenance of partition fence lines must be continued to comply with state law. Reducing posting activity would invite additional trespass onto adjoining private property. Discontinuance of pheasant stocking would be very unpopular, especially since native populations are not adequate.

Under this alternative, consideration would have to be given to reducing the amount of acreage owned to reduce fencing and trespass problems. Increasing demand for wildlife related recreation would not be met under this alternative.

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